

BOOK REVIEW

Labor's Giant Step

The First 20 Years of the CIO: 1936-55

BY ART PREIS

The late Preis, a long-time member of the Socialist Workers Party and staff writer for the SWP's newsweekly *The Militant*, narrates the history of the first twenty years of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, from its founding in 1936 to its merger with the American Federation of Labor. For Preis, who joined the 1934 Toledo Electric strike as a young worker, the rise of the CIO was “the most significant event in modern American history” in that it marked the emergence of class struggle by American workers on a massive scale, whatever the failures of the CIO leadership, which constantly sought to subordinate the interests of the workers to that of the capitalist state. Nevertheless, the story he tells is one of “historic achievement for the working class” in forging a “class organization never equaled in size or surpassed in picket-line and shop militancy” In telling the story, Preis largely bases his history on eyewitness and contemporary accounts from the commercial daily press, union and socialist periodicals, *The Militant* in particular, which published many of Preis's own eyewitness accounts of strikes and other labor events.